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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 002118

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2014  
TAGS: PHUM PGOV PINS MOFS ECON EMIN CG  
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE MASSACRE AT KILWA

REF: A. KINSHASA 1931  
B. KINSHASA 1965

Classified By: Poloff Edward Bestic for Reasons 1.5 B and D

1. (C) SUMMARY: According to sources in Katanga province, the October 2004 "insurgency" at Kilwa on the Congo-Zambia border was more likely a tragic farce than a real attack, and government troops may have massacred dozens of civilians when they recaptured the town. Explanations for the incident vary, ranging from local resentment against a nearby mine to a conflict between Katangans within the Presidency. The allegations of a massacre of civilians by government troops are believable, and--given the high-level Kinshasa interest in Dikulushi mine--we can expect GDRC authorities to obstruct any investigation. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) Poloff visited Lubumbashi and Kalemie in DRC's Katanga province from Nov. 7-13 and met with local civil and military officials, diplomats, U.N. and international NGO workers, and members of civil society. The following--a dissection of the recent "attack" on the town of Kilwa--is the first in a series of short cables on the trip.

#### Kilwa - the Basic Facts

3. (U) In mid-October, a small group of armed men seized the town of Kilwa near the Congo-Zambia border, which is about 50km from Dikulushi, a copper and silver mine run by Australian company Anvil Mining Limited. (Comment: One of the mine's shareholders is Augustin Katumba Mwanke, former governor of Katanga province and a top adviser to President Kabila. End Comment.) Government troops--who had vacated Kilwa only the day before--responded quickly, and within two days had captured the insurgent leader and reasserted control over the town. Military authorities in Lubumbashi later arrested prominent local politician Christian Mwando Simba in connection with the events, releasing him after approximately two weeks' detention. (Note: Mwando's father, Charles Mwando Simba, is chairman of the political committee in the National Assembly. End Note.)

4. (C) Gen. Dieugentil Alengbia Nzambe, commander of the 6th Military Region, told poloff the Kilwa incident was "not serious." The "insurgents" attacked only after the regular contingent of troops had withdrawn, and got most of their weapons from local armories. Alengbia refused to speculate on who or what was behind the attack, but he said that contrary to media reports, there were no Portuguese-speakers among the rebels.

#### Massacre at Kilwa?

5. (C) One expatriate NGO source who visited Kilwa after the incident said locals told him the rebels numbered no more than thirty or forty and had no problems with the local populace. Several hundred government troops captured the town almost without a fight, then apparently went after civilian collaborators. The source said that locals resent the mine because it employs no Congolese and has done nothing for them, but added that Anvil is currently looking to partner up with one or more international NGOs to implement local development projects.

6. (C) In the opinion of a MONUC official who also traveled to Kilwa to investigate the incident, the whole thing was a sham. The locals, mainly of the Bemba tribe, were indeed angry at Anvil. There were only about five or six armed rebels, led by a 24-year old (who conveniently died of his wounds before authorities could question him). These rebels quickly recruited local youths to their cause, did no damage to the town, and expected government troops to support them. They were completely surprised when troops of Pweto garrison commander Col. Ademar (phonetic)--reportedly an ally of Air Force commander Gen. John Numbi and Mai-Mai leader Gedeon--counterattacked instead. Local inhabitants fled when the army arrived, and soldiers then began to "settle scores" and loot the town. The MONUC official said locals also pointed out a mass grave that they claimed contained perhaps twenty to thirty bodies. (Comment: To date, no one in the GDRC or MONUC has commented publicly on the possibility of a massacre at Kilwa. End Comment.)

## Mixed Reactions Among Diplomats

17. (C) Lubumbashi-based diplomats were mixed in their assessments. A South African diplomat expressed appreciation that the government's reaction to Dikulushi was strong and swift, even if it was heavy-handed, because such incidents were likely to occur more frequently in the run-up to elections. A Belgian diplomat agreed it was likely a massacre took place in Kilwa, and asked rhetorically how long the international community could tolerate such misrule in the Congo. The diplomat speculated that the Kilwa incident stemmed from a conflict in President Kabila's inner circle, between members of the Luba Katanga tribe (such as Air Force commander John Numbi) and those from other Katangan tribes (like Katumba Mwanke), and said it was likely President Kabila knows nothing of the massacre or the extent of the internal conflict. (Note: The Luba Katanga are the dominant tribe in the province. They were the backbone of a massive ethnic-cleansing campaign in Katanga in the early 1990s. End Note.)

## COMMENT

18. (C) In the DRC, skirmishes over mines are not unheard of, but they more typically take place in the Kivus and Orientale Province, not Katanga. It is clear that this particular "attack" was too weak to succeed on its own, and that the rebels were merely pawns in a larger game. The allegations of a massacre of civilians by government troops are entirely believable, and--given the high-level Kinshasa interest in Dikulushi mine--we can expect GDRC authorities to obstruct any investigation. We will continue to raise Kilwa with presidential advisors, if only to give notice that we suspect the possibility of foul play. END COMMENT.  
MEECE